

Text: John 20:11-18 EHV.

Six Months to Easter.

October 4, 2020.

The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!)

What's Easter like? What do you think of when you think of Easter? I'm guessing it's usually good stuff. Big breakfast, new bonnet. Probably happy emotions. Spring time. Family time. Best day of the year in church. Facility full. Well, except for this year, for obvious reasons. Singing loud! The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!) But what was Easter like the first time? How did the people who experienced Jesus' resurrection, up close, and personal, how did they feel? What were they thinking? What emotions, what thoughts were in their minds and hearts?

Would you believe the first emotion we encounter is sadness? Yes. Sad was what Easter was like. Now, I know we only meet one person, Mary Magdalene, in this part of God's Word, but her sadness is pretty indicative of what others were feeling as well. Mary was sad. Jesus was dead. That's what Easter was like. Mary was sad. Jesus was dead.

She went to tomb. She is weeping. If you look closely at our center panel, you can see tears in her eyes, on her face. But this weeping was probably more than tears. It involved wailing, loud noises. Grief! Grief you can see. Grief you can hear. Jesus is dead! She's standing at a tomb. She looks into the tomb. Who expects to see a living guy in a cemetery? Does sadness ever describe your Easter? Expecting so much, but getting so little? And Easter was taken away this year!

But a living guy is exactly what she saw. And not just one living guy, but two living guys. Angels. Both of them. Dressed in the whitest clothes you had ever seen. Add confusion to the sadness. These angels are sitting where Jesus' body had been. But Jesus' body isn't there. More confusion, on top of tears.

And then they ask the most caring question, "Why are you weeping?" Talk about more confusion. I imagine all the sadness and all the confusion of this first Easter coming out from Mary. "Isn't it obvious? Can't you tell? I came here looking for Jesus. He's my Lord. (Let's praise Mary for her confession, not scold her for her confusion.) And someone has taken him away. I lost him once when he was alive. And now he's dead. And now I've lost him again when he's dead. Lost him alive. Lost him dead. I don't know where they have put him. I'm sad. I'm confused. And you guys aren't helping!" Ever confused at Easter? How can a dead guy be alive? How does someone rise from the dead?

Then the incredible, the unbelievable, happens. Jesus shows up. And Mary sees him. But doesn't see him. Maybe it was the tears. Maybe it was the grief. Maybe it was the confusion. Maybe Jesus didn't want to be recognized just yet. That happened other times after Easter. But, would you expect to see the guy you buried 40 hours before, alive, standing there, talking to you? "Woman, why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?" Interesting how Jesus is reaching out to a sad soul. Mary's sadness, grief might explain why she almost sounds delusional. She's going to carry the body away? By herself? Now, maybe she wasn't thinking by herself, that she would get help. Maybe this gardener could assist. But she's not thinking clearly. She's in a cemetery, early in the morning, after a couple of probably sleepless nights, after watching her Lord die, on a cross, while weeping and wailing and sad and confused and after having seen angels and losing Jesus twice, dead and alive and none of this makes sense, and I'm sad and confused and delusional. That's what the first Easter was like.

And is that what Easter is like, for you, today? Sad you missed the big brunch and the big family get together and the big egg hunt? Was that really what made you sad? Even when you come here and the

place is full and you sing and the floor shakes with sound, are you still a little confused? Can a guy really rise from the dead? Is this really for real, for real? It's all so incredible, unbelievable is what incredible means. It sounds delusional. I will rise? From the dead? I will live? Forever? My sin says, "It ain't so!" Satan says, "It can't be so." My guilt says, "It ain't for me." Sad. Confused. Delusional. Incredible. That's what Easter can feel like.

But with a word, it all changes. With one word, life was never the same, for Mary. Just one word, her name. And her eyes saw Jesus, through the tears and the grief. Her soul saw Jesus, her Lord and her Savior. Sadness? Gone! Tears? Wiped away! Confusion? Cast in the cave! Delusion? No way. He's really alive!! Incredible? Yes, but Jesus' word gives me faith to believe it. Just one word. "It is finished." Was just one word when Jesus said it from the cross. And it is still finished. All your sins are paid in full. All your guilt is gone. "He is risen!" Just one word when the angels said it. All his promises are true. His life was perfect and so you are perfect in God's eyes. His death was more than enough to satisfy God's justice. His blood was precious enough, and then some, to bring your soul to God. Easter takes away sadness. Easter removes all confusion. It's not delusion. Jesus is alive! He really rose from the dead! That's what Easter is like! It's a day to see Jesus!

But if only I had seen what Mary saw and heard what Mary heard. Jesus never showed up and called my name. Well... Jesus showed up at your baptism. His holy hand touched your head. He called your name and washed away your sins, just for you. I know it was an ordinary guy, probably in a white dress, but isn't that what Mary saw? Two angels in white clothes? An angel is a messenger. God used a messenger to call your name and declare for you what Jesus declared for all the world, "You are forgiven! You are loved! You are mine! You belong to Jesus! He rose and so this one has risen! He lives and so you are now alive!" That's what Easter is. It's a day to see Jesus.

Well, then. Mary got to see Jesus. Mary recognized Jesus. This has been called the greatest moment of recognition of all time. Picture the movie scene in your mind, the close up on Mary's face. The tears still streaming down. The light comes on in her mind and you see it on her face and all the way to her soul. This is Jesus! He is alive! So then Mary does what's natural, right? She grabs onto Jesus. She lost him once. Lost him twice. She wasn't going to lose him again. Who can blame her for clinging to Christ, isn't that what you are supposed to do? Why did Jesus scold her? Why tell her, "Do not continue to cling to me"? We could offer countless speculations. But Easter isn't about speculation. Let's look at the words of Jesus. That's what Easter is all about. Jesus says, "I have not yet ascended to my Father." Jesus' work of living, dying, rising, was complete. But the exclamation point hadn't been put on yet. Jesus still had to show, "I didn't rise to die again, like those I raised from the dead. I rose to live again, forever and ever, like all those I will raise from the dead when I come again."

Jesus is also getting at something deeper here. Jesus is saying, "Mary, don't try to hold me down. Let me raise you up. Don't try to keep me on earth. Let me take you to heaven. Don't think I'm going to set up a kingdom on earth. I have a kingdom in heaven and I want nothing more than to take you there. In fact, I'm going there to get a perfect mansion ready for you. It has your name on it. My Father built it. He's your father too. My God got it ready. He's your God too."

Did you catch those relational words, brothers, Father? Did you catch the equality words? My Father and your Father, my God and your God? Jesus had called his followers friends before. But this was the first time he called them brothers. That's what Easter is like, we get to be part of the family with Jesus. Jesus could have called them the traitors who bailed on me when I needed them most. Jesus could have

called them fleers, who ran at the first sign of trouble. He could have called them scaredy cats, hiding behind locked doors. That's actually what these guys did on the first Easter night.

But Jesus didn't. He called them, "Brothers." Bound to me by my blood, the blood I poured out for them and now will give them over and over. The same blood Jesus poured out for you and gives you over and over. The same blood that binds all of Jesus' followers into a family. A family. That's what you will find here at Resurrection Lutheran Church, a family. Here you will find forgiveness. We don't expect you to be perfect. We expect you to sin. And we expect you will be overjoyed to have your sins forgiven, week after week, after week. We love you, just the way you are. But like Jesus corrected Mary when she tried to keep Jesus on earth, we will love you enough to correct you when you mess up. Jesus loves you just the way you are. But he loves you too much to let you stay exactly that way. He has something better in mind for his brothers and sisters. Here you will find relationships. A heavenly Father who created you and gave his only Son for you. A brother who loved you so much he literally died for you. And yes, you will find brothers and sisters here who are willing to die for you, that's what family does: puts the other ahead of self. People here say, "Church family," because that's what Easter is like, every week, celebrating with family, celebrating good news: Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose!

That's one final thing Easter is like: announcing good news. The word, "announced," is only used one place in the Bible. Right here. It literally means, "Mary kept on angelling." Mary was an angel, announcing good news again and again. Mary was an angel to Jesus' brothers. She started with people she knew. She announced to those closest to her. She was an angel, a messenger with good news from heaven, "Jesus is alive! The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!)"

And that's what Easter is like. For us. We get to be angels. Not just the guy in the white dress up front. But you. To those closest to you. To the people you already know. Tell them, "We celebrated Easter today." And if someone says, "That's weird." Just say, "We celebrate Easter every week. Every week is good news. The Lord is risen!" (he is risen indeed). I know Easter can be confusing, unbelievable, even sad. But once Jesus shows up, Easter is a day Jesus calls your name. Easter is a day to cling to Jesus. Easter is a day to celebrate, "I'm part of Jesus' family!" Easter is a day to be an angel and announce good news, "The Lord is risen!" (He is risen indeed!) Amen and Alleluia!

The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!)